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An update for members and partners of the new Marine Recreational Information Program

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FULL STORIES

From the Chairman's Desk

We're fortunate NOAA and our partners employ some of the most talented fishery survey statisticians and analysts. Involving them in the MRIP initiative was part of our commitment to bringing the best minds together to build an improved recreational data program.

It's often difficult to see the forest when you're standing behind a tree. Even with these smart people already on board, a fresh look and a new perspective can be a good thing. This is especially true when undertaking a program redesign with so many moving parts and tight timelines.

As you'll read about in the work group updates below, there are a lot of changes going on. With all these changes hitting us at once, we recognize that consultants can help steer us through this unfamiliar territory. Each work group has brought in respected experts from academia and industry including several panelists from the original National Research Council review. These outside voices infuse fresh ideas and an impartial perspective that serves as a reality check for our current practices.

Dr. John Boreman
Chair, Executive Steering Committee

Public Encouraged to Comment on Angler Registry Proposed Rule

The proposed new federal rule intended to create a national "phonebook" of saltwater anglers is one of numerous activities that NOAA is undertaking with its partners to maintain and improve the wellbeing of marine ecosystems. The registry and surveys based on this registry will help policy-makers and scientists to build a more complete picture of anglers' catch and effort. Further, this comprehensive list will better capture anglers' contributions to the health of ocean fisheries and the economy.

Before the rule is finalized, NOAA is encouraging every person who has an opinion about the rule to comment. To read the proposed rule, go to www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov. Comments, due by August 11th, can be submitted electronically at www.regulations.gov.

Work Group Updates

Groups of experts from both inside and outside of government have been convened to deal with distinct aspects of the Marine Recreational Information Program initiative. For more information about their projects and progress, visit their individual pages under the "About Us" tab at www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov.

Angler Registry Database

Working closely with the Design and Analysis and Data Management and Standards work groups, the Angler Registry Database group is currently reviewing potential implications of the Proposed Rule. The group is working on data quality standards for the registry and in particular discussing the potential challenges of getting reliably good phone numbers from retailers.

Data Management and Standards

Progress on the work group's two main projects 1) compiling an inventory of data collection programs and 2) creating a system requirements document to ensure compatibility is on schedule with the majority of data from the major data collection programs already entered into a data management system.

Design and Analysis

Experts in survey design and analysis have been brought on board to help with each of the group's four projects: (1) Review of Statistical Sampling and Estimation Procedures, (2) Improving Recreational Fisheries Discard Data, (3) Sampling Private Access and Night Fishing, and (4) Accounting for Incomplete Angler License Frames. Each project team has conducted a kickoff meeting and is documenting next steps.

For-Hire

A pilot project to develop and test an electronic data collection project for the for-hire industry in Puerto Rico was delayed due to a funding hold-up, but is now up and running. The group's plan to inventory and review existing data collection methods got a boost when they were able to hire three independent scientific reviewers. A final report from the reviewers is anticipated this fall.

Highly Migratory Species

A pilot project to evaluate the sampling distribution of HMS tournament trips from Maine to Virginia is underway with a target completion date of early 2009. A data collection contract was awarded to the Strategic Research Group to conduct a characterization survey of HMS fisheries in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico (excluding Florida). Data collection is expected to begin in mid-August. A pilot project to characterize HMS fisheries in Puerto Rico is fully funded. A survey instrument has been created and data collection will begin in November. Two Florida pilot projects have already begun gathering data on the for-hire and private boat HMS fisheries.

Listening Sessions Conclude

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council hosted the program team leads last week in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This was the last in a series of meetings with the Agency's science and management partners to listen and learn about each region's specific data and management needs. To read summaries of each regional listening session, go to www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov and click on the "Events and Meetings" tab.

Recreational Catch Down Slightly, Remains Second Highest Catch in Decade

Marine recreational anglers caught more than 468 million fish in 2007, down slightly from last year's historic high of 475 million fish, but still the second highest recreational catch total in the last ten years. Read more from the latest NOAA Fisheries publication, *Fisheries of the United States*, at www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

MRIP in the News

An op-ed on the angler registry from NOAA Assistant Administrator Jim Balsiger was highlighted in the July 25th edition of the *Providence Journal*.

In the past month, the angler registry proposed rule has generated numerous articles in newspapers and fishing publications from coast to coast including the Bangor Daily News (ME), Norwich Bulletin (CT), Florida Fishing Weekly, and Worcester Telegram (MA) among many others.

See an article about MRIP in the news? Please share it with us by contacting Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov.

Ongoing and Upcoming Events

Highlighted events for mid-summer include the final regional listening session, an international scientific conference, and a series of public forums focused on the angler registry proposal.

July

July 1-3	Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting, New York, NY
July 15	Plum Island Surfcasters Meeting, Newbury, MA
July 15-16	Florida MRFSS Sampler Training, St. Pete, FL
July 16	Public Meeting on the Saltwater Angler Registry, Portsmouth, NH
July 17	Public Meeting on Saltwater Angler Registry, Hilo, HI
July 22-24	Caribbean Listening Session, San Juan, PR

August

Aug 5	Maryland Saltwater Sportsmen's Assn Board Meeting, Pasadena, MD
Aug 7	Mid-Atlantic Council Meeting, Philadelphia, PA
Aug 11	MILESTONE – PROPOSED RULE COMMENT PERIOD CLOSES
Aug 17	Celebrate the Bay Stripers Tournament, Greenland, NH
Aug 17-21	American Fisheries Society 138 th Annual Meeting, Ottawa, Ontario
Aug 18-21	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Mtg, Alexandria, VA

Click www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov for a complete schedule of upcoming briefings. If you're interested in inviting a representative of the initiative to provide a briefing to your organization, please contact Forbes Darby.

Newscast updates are e-mailed monthly to NOAA Fisheries, state natural resource agencies, marine fisheries commissions, fishery management councils and members of the sportfishing community with an interest in the initiative to improve saltwater recreational fishing information. For more information, contact Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov or by phone at (301) 713-9501.